

ITEM 8 – Action
September 22, 2021

Transit Within Reach

Action: Approve Transit Within Reach technical assistance projects.

Background: Staff solicited applications for the initial round of Transit Within Reach Program technical assistance between May 3 and July 1, 2021. The board will be briefed and asked to approve the applications that are being recommended for FY 2022 funding.



MEMORANDUM

TO: National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board
FROM: Nicole McCall, Transportation Planner
SUBJECT: FY 2022/23 Transit Within Reach Technical Assistance Funding Recommendations
DATE: September 16, 2021

The TPB is scheduled to review and approve the first round of Transit Within Reach technical assistance projects on September 22. This memo provides information on the recommendations of the selection panel for the FY 2022/23 round of technical assistance under the TPB's Transit Within Reach Program.

PROGRAM BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

Over the next decade, more than half of the region's job growth and over 40 percent of the region's new households are forecast to be located within a half-mile of high-capacity transit. Yet, even where transit is physically close, it often is not within reach for people who walk and bike. Sidewalks are missing, crosswalks are unsafe, trails and paths are yet to be built.

Over the last couple of decades, a regional consensus has confirmed the importance of walk and bike access to transit. Visualize 2045 identified "Improving Walk and Bike Access to Transit" as one of seven regional initiatives that can positively affect travel conditions in the future. The Visualize plan noted that investments to improve nonmotorized access to transit should be considered regionally significant because they will not simply serve local circulation needs but will also improve access to regional transit systems, including Metrorail, commuter rail, light rail, streetcar, and bus rapid transit. In July 2020, the TPB approved a list of 49 Transit Access Focus Areas, high priority locations for improving access to transit. These are places with deficiencies in the existing walksheds around stations as well as the presence of latent demand for walking and biking. We are now sharpening our focus on this issue with a new program. Its goal is to move small, high-impact projects that improve bike and walk access to transit into preliminary design or preliminary engineering (up to 30 percent).

The Transit Within Reach Program has just gone through its first solicitation. During the selection panel meeting in August, the group identified three projects to recommend for funding in FY 2022/23. The TPB is scheduled to review and approve the panel's recommendations on September 22.

FUNDING RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FY 2022/23

A total of \$250,000 is available in FY 2022/23 through the Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) Technical Assistance Regional Transit Account. The selection panel recommends the three projects below for funding.

The recommended projects are consistent with the priorities of the Transit Within Reach Program:

- the projects are in Transit Access Focus Areas and improve bike/ped access to high-capacity transit;
- the projects support access improvements that will increase transit ridership and/or utilization of available ridership capacity;
- the projects will improve access for low-income communities and communities of color; two projects are within Equity Emphasis Areas; and
- the applications described strategies to advance the projects to construction.

Projects recommended for funding:

Preliminary Design for new shared-use path connection within Broad Run Transit Access Focus Area
City of Manassas, \$74,000

This project will develop the preliminary design for a new shared-use path connection to the Broad Run VRE Station. It will tie in with the VRE Broad Run Expansion project which is in final design and will provide new platform access north of the railroad tracks, a multimodal parking facility, and a pedestrian tunnel to access the platform. This project will provide the last missing link for a safe and direct bicycle and pedestrian access from the City to the expansion of the Broad Run Station. The final products will include a survey, preliminary design plans and typical sections for the trail, and a cost estimate for final design and construction.

Preliminary Engineering of the Walter Johnson Road Shared-use Path Connection to the Germantown MARC Station

Montgomery County, \$85,000

This project will complete the preliminary design for a new shared-use path. This facility will give people walking and biking from nearby residential and commercial areas a consistent, comfortable, and direct connection to the Germantown MARC station. The Germantown station is the highest ridership station in the MARC system, excluding Union Station, on the Brunswick line, and ridership growth is currently constrained by parking availability since most riders arrive by car. This connection will support growth in ridership by reducing the need for patrons to drive from nearby locations. The final products will include preliminary design plans and a cost estimate for the Walter Johnson Road Shared-Use path.

Suitland-Silver Hill Neighborhood Pedestrian and Bike Access Improvement Project

Prince George's County, \$85,000

This project will develop 30 percent designs for safe pedestrian and bicycle facilities, as well as traffic calming features to connect the neighborhood along Navy Day Drive, Navy Day Place, and Glenn Drive to the Suitland Metro Station. Nearly a quarter of the households within the project area do not have access to a car and the neighborhood lacks infrastructure to support safe walk access to the station. Planned improvements include new sidewalk, path, and curb, traffic calming elements, signing and pavement markings, pedestrian-scale lighting, potential landscaping, and new bus shelters. The final products will include the preliminary design plans, a topographic survey, and a cost estimate.

APPLICATION PROCESS

On May 3, 2021, the TPB issued a call for projects for the FY 2022/23 round of the Transit Within Reach Program. The deadline for application submissions was July 1, 2021. Applicants were invited to submit optional abstracts which provided applicants an interim opportunity for TPB staff to review project concepts and to provide feedback on how to develop stronger applications.

Technical assistance was offered in an amount of up to \$85,000 for preliminary design or engineering projects. The Call for Projects and the application placed a focus on improving walk and bike access to transit (in particular in Transit Access Focus Areas), access improvements that will increase transit ridership and/or utilization of available ridership capacity, access for low-income communities and communities of color, collaboration with other agencies or jurisdictions, and strategies to advance projects to construction.

The TPB received six applications in response to this solicitation. Total requested funding for the entire application package was \$474,000.

For this application cycle, \$250,000 is available from the Regional Transit UPWP Technical Assistance Account.

SELECTION PROCESS

The selection panel included the following members:

- James Carrington, Chair of Bicycle and Pedestrian Subcommittee
- Deanna Archey, Chair of Regional Public Transportation Subcommittee
- Charlene Howard, TPB staff
- Nicole McCall, TPB staff
- John Swanson, TPB staff

The selection panel met on August 17 and August 20 to review the project applications and develop a list of recommended projects for the FY 2022/23 round of technical assistance. The selection panel used program priorities and their own extensive industry knowledge to assess the proposed projects. The selection panel members individually reviewed and scored each application in advance based on their assessments of the projects as well as regional criteria. The panel members then used their scores to divide the applications in rankings of high/medium/low. The rankings served as a starting point for the panel's collective discussion.

Based upon discussion of the regional and local merits of the applications, the selection panel developed a list of three projects to recommend to the TPB for approval. The panel believes this package of projects will be locally and regionally beneficial. In developing the list, the panel aimed to equitably allocate funding across the region and across the modes of transit, while selecting projects that improve walk and bike access to high-capacity transit.

PROPOSED PROJECT COMPLETION TIMELINE

On September 22, 2021, the TPB will be asked to approve the proposed slate of three projects for technical assistance under the FY 2022/23 Transit Within Reach Program. Upon approval of the projects, TPB staff will begin to coordinate with the jurisdictions that have been awarded technical assistance to commence the consultant selection process from the pre-qualified list of TLC consultants. All projects will begin soon after consultant contracts are signed. The projects will be scheduled for completion near the end of calendar year 2022.

For further questions regarding the Transit Within Reach Program, contact Nicole McCall (nmccall@mwkog.org; 202-962-3341) or John Swanson (jswanson@mwkog.org; 202-962-3295).

TRANSIT WITHIN REACH

FY 2022/23 Technical Assistance

Nicole McCall, TPB Transportation Planner

Transportation Planning Board
September 22, 2021



Background

- More than half of the region's job growth and over 40 percent of new households over the next decade are expected to be within a half-mile of high-capacity transit
- Even where transit is physically close, it often is not within reach for people who walk and bike



Purpose

- New Program / First Round
- Goal to move small, high-impact projects that improve walk and/or bike access to transit into preliminary design or preliminary engineering (up to 30 percent)
- Program funded by UPWP Technical Assistance Regional Transit Account



Solicitation

- \$250,000 contributed for first round (FY 2022/23)
- Application solicitation period May 3 to July 1, 2021
 - Optional Abstracts due May 18
- 6 applications were received for \$474,000 in funding requests
- Short-term consultant services, not direct financial assistance
- Projects to be completed in late 2022/early 2023
- Solicitation to be repeated every other year



Program Priorities

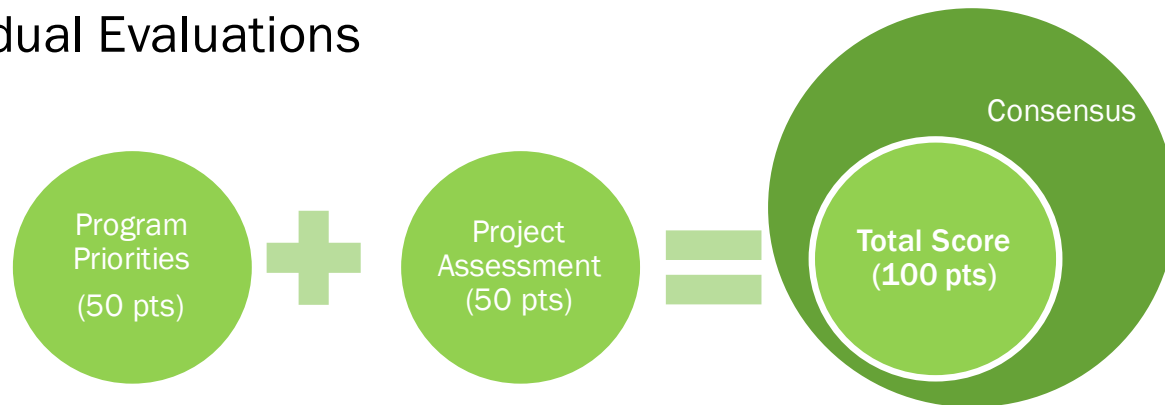
Seeking preliminary design and engineering projects that:

1. Improve bike/ped access to High-Capacity Transit, in particular, to our Transit Access Focus Areas
2. Increase transit ridership and/or utilize available ridership capacity
3. Improve access for low-income communities and communities of color
4. Demonstrate collaboration with other agencies or jurisdictions
5. Demonstrate strategies to advance project to construction



Selection

- Selection Panel
 - Chair of Regional Public Transportation Subcommittee
 - Chair of Bicycle and Pedestrian Subcommittee
 - 3 TPB Staff
- Individual Evaluations



- Consensus Building Meeting – Seek balance among projects (transit modes, regional balance, equity)

Overview of Recommendations

- 3 applications recommended for funding:
 - In Transit Access Focus Areas and improve bike/ped access to high-capacity transit
 - Support access improvements that will increase transit ridership and/or utilization of available ridership capacity
 - Improve access for low-income communities and communities of color; 2 projects are within Equity Emphasis Areas
 - Demonstrate strategies to advance project to construction
- 2 commuter rail projects; 1 Metrorail project
- 2 projects in Maryland; 1 project in Virginia



Draft Funding Recommendations

Jurisdiction Name	Project	Panel Recommendation
City of Manassas	Preliminary design for new shared-use path connection within Broad Run Transit Access Focus Area (TAFA)	\$74,000
Montgomery County	Preliminary Engineering of the Walter Johnson Road Shared-use Path connection to the Germantown MARC Station	\$85,000
Prince George's County	Suitland-Silver Hill Neighborhood pedestrian and Bike Access Improvement Project	\$85,000



Next Steps

- Seek TPB approval of project recommendations at meeting on September 22
- Begin consultant selection process



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